

Message Text

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44

ACTION ARA-20

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 OMB-01 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03

INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-07 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SPC-03

SS-20 USIA-15 AID-20 PC-10 EUR-25 NIC-01 COME-00

EB-11 LAB-06 SIL-01 TRSE-00 AGR-20 DRC-01 /191 W

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R 191356Z MAR 74

FM AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6583

INFO AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA

AMEMBASSY MANAGUA

AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE

AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR

USCINCSO

C O N F I D E N T I A L TEGUCIGALPA 1157

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, HO

SUBJECT: GENERAL SOMOZA CONDEMNS HONDURAN AGRARIAN REFORM

REF: TEGUCIGALPA 1084

1. DURING MEETING OF CENTRAL AMERICAN CHIEFS OF STATE IN TEGUCIGALPA GENERAL SOMOZA TOOK OPPORTUNITY TO CONDEMN HONDURAN AGRARIAN REFORM AS "COMMUNIST." VARIOUS CHIEFS OF STATE WENT TO CATTLE EXPOSITION ON AFTERNOON OF MARCH 15 TO SEE SHOW. AFTERWARDS A LARGE GATHERING MET IN THE EXPOSITION RESTAURANT FOR DRINKS. GENERAL SOMOZA, CHIEF OF STATE LOPEZ AND THEIR AIDES SAT AT FRONT TABLE WHILE SURROUNDING TABLES OCCUPIED BY MANY CATTLEMEN, FARMERS AND ASSORTED BANKERS, LABOR UNION LEADERS AND REPORTERS.

2. ACCORDING TO EYEWITNESSES SOMOZA HAD BEEN DRINKING HEAVILY AND WAS HARAGUING LOPEZ ABOUT THE PROPOSED HONDURAN AGRARIAN REFORM. SOMOZA CALLED IT "PURE COMMUNISM" AND SAID THAT IT
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DID NOT SUIT HONDURAS OR ITS NEIGHBORS. HE ALSO SAID THAT

HE HAD HEARD THAT THERE WERE THESE FOREIGN COMMUNISTS HELPING TO PREPARE IT AND WHEN MINISTER OF NATURAL RESOURCES ESCOTO ATTEMPTED TO TELL HIM THAT THEY WERE WELL QUALIFIED SOMOZA RESPONDED THAT IN NICARAGUA SUCH PLANS WERE PREPARED BY NICARAGUANS AND THAT FOREIGN COMMUNISTS WERE THROWN OUT OF THE COUNTRY.

IN SUBSEQUENT CONVERSATION VICTOR ARTILES, SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE CONFEDERATION OF HONDURAN WORKERS, TOLD EMBOFFS THAT MANY OF THE CATTLEMEN APPLAUDED SOMOZA'S REMARKS AND CHEERED HIM WHEN HE LEFT. HE REMARKED THAT LOPEZ HAD SAID VERY LITTLE.

3. COMMENT: SOMOZ'S REMARKS DURING AN ESSENTIALLY OPEN MEETING SEEMED DESIGNED TO EMBARRASS HIS HOST. HE IS OBVIOUSLY AWARE OF THE POLITICAL SENSITIVITY OF AGRARIAN REFORM IN HONDURAS BUT NEVERTHELESS CRITICIZED THE PROPOSED LAW WHILE SITTING AT THE SAME TABLE AS LOPEZ AND SURROUNDED BY MANY CATTLEMEN OPPOSED TO SUCH A MEASURE. SOMOZA'S REMARKS BECAME PUBLIC KNOWLEDGE ALMOST IMMEDIATELY, EVEN BEFORE THEY APPEARED IN EL CRONISTA THE FOLLOWING DAY.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: COMMUNISM, AGRICULTURAL PROGRAMS, CHIEFS OF STATE MEETINGS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 19 MAR 1974
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: golinofr
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1974TEGUCI01157
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: n/a
From: TEGUCIGALPA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1974/newtext/t19740331/aaaabdam.tel
Line Count: 82
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE
Office: ACTION ARA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: TEGUCIGALPA 1084
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: golinofr
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 09 SEP 2002
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <09 SEP 2002 by boyleja>; APPROVED <03 JAN 2003 by golinofr>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: GENERAL SOMOZA CONDEMNS HONDURAN AGRARIAN REFORM
TAGS: PINT, HO, (SOMOZA DEBAYLE, ANASTASIO)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005